

Big Pine Key/US 1 Corridor Area Enhancement Plan

The following is offered as an implementation guide for the Enhancement Plan. Projects that are at the top of the list are funded or do not require land acquisition in order to move forward. Other projects are very important or serve to establish the future character, but may require heavy coordination and require bigger expenditures, suggesting they happen later.

1a & 1b The Gateways

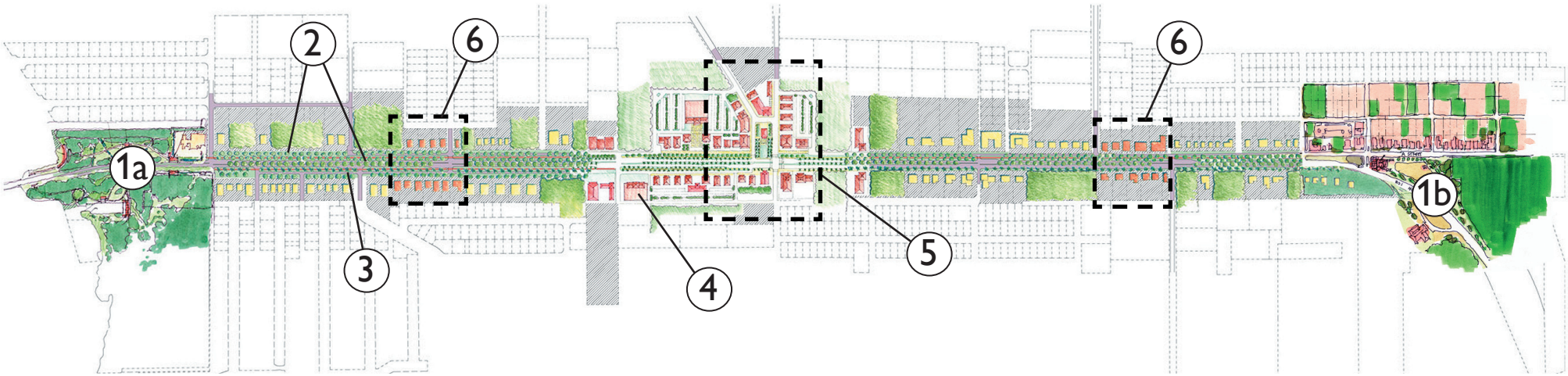
The western and eastern ends of the study area provide opportunities to present the new image of the Corridor better than any other single location. Done properly, the Gateways can set the stage for the character of the Corridor. Improvements to the West Park (1a) are funded and the ground is prepared, having recently been cleared of exotics. Improvements to the East Park may require additional land acquisition, especially at the north, but is not far behind the West Park in its ability to show not only progress, but a finished project in the shortest period of time. Completing these projects would accomplish 2 things: First, the establishment of a large-scale character-giving project physically illustrates the County's commitment to the entire plan and serves to give a clear and unique identity to Big Pine Key, literally setting the stage for the ensuing improvements. Secondly, the fact that the project is funded and the site is prepared (in the case of the West Park), or nearly so (in the case of the East Park) make the Gateway Improvements an excellent choice for a first effort.

2 General Streetscape Improvements

While the Corridor study area is almost 2 miles long, General Streetscape Improvements can occur in two parts - the adoption of specific guidelines and the implementation of those specific guidelines. The adoption of specific streetscape standards, including signage, furnishings, sidewalk materials and construction techniques are important to have in place prior to the street(s) being affected. We recommend that as part of the implementation of key projects - such as the gateways - the streetscape of that particular location be improved simultaneously.

3 The "Reverse Flow Roads" and the Bike Path

Each of these improvements can serve as a great physical design opportunity and act as a catalyst to encourage private investment toward enhancing the corridor's image. From a physical standpoint, the reverse flow roads help diffuse conflicts of local and non-local traffic along US 1 by providing specific rights-of-way for "internal" circulation. As these thoroughfares are detailed, with plantings and furnishings, an attractive streetscape will provide stimulation for property owners to tend to visual improvements of private buildings and lots, a phenomenon that happens often as a direct result of the public improvements. The inclusion of a bicycle path provides for the inclusion of a secondary form of transportation, increasing the ability to get from one end of the Corridor to the other with fewer automobile-bicycle conflicts (as the bike path is separated horizontally and vertically from the roadway). The bicycle path is also given direct access to many of the Corridor's destinations, rather than being proposed as a recreation-only thoroughfare. When implemented, the bicycle path can honestly provide an additional mode of transportation that is safe and convenient to use.



Both these improvements are planned to occur within the public right-of-way, without needing to expand the width of US1. Therefore, the timing of the project is not impeded by the necessity to acquire additional lands. However, as any improvement to US1 requires not only the attention and coordination of multiple agencies but specific funding, neither is viewed as a candidate for the first phase of implementation. However, each can be implemented incrementally. One working section of the bike path, for instance, can provide the opportunity to measure costs and impacts against the benefits in order to move forward.

4 Flea Market

Improvements to the Flea Market can assist in redefining the character of the Corridor in both form and function. First, the Flea market has been a cultural icon for Big Pine Key for years. Its continued existence will be important to the stability of the Key's heritage. Therefore improvements to the Flea market should be targeted at ensuring its long-term existence, not toward affecting significant changes to its character. The improvements are twofold - to increase the property size and permit more space for better operations; and to provide a simple structure that can offer permanent vendors protection from the elements and provide a permanent "marquee" on US1. The building itself provides additional frontage on the road and could act as a first step in the development of the Village Center project(s). This project is viewed as a likely development scenario because the necessary ground is available to expand the operations of the Flea Market and because the improvements are capable of resulting in civic pride.

5 Village Center

The single largest project proposed in the Enhancement Plan is that of the creation of a specific Village Center. The benefits are described in depth in the report, but cannot be overstated. A commitment to a plan that includes the Village Center as its focus is a plan that speaks to both quantity issues such as traffic and transportation matters, and quality issues such as the real, tangible design and delivery of a real place, inspiring all those who pass through it and use it.

The Village Center is a big project - requiring coordination of different agencies, land-owners, and jurisdictions, demands that several transportation and traffic issues are to be solved during any infrastructure changes, impacts the largest number of people including residents and tourists, all while assuming that prior to its construction, the moratorium is lifted. The expense of a Village Center is arguably high, when compared with other gestures presented here. Despite its hard costs, we have recommended that this project occur fifth only because of the complex process needed to implement it and the direct costs associated with its design and construction. No other project, can provide as much of a positive impact on the Corridor and on Big Pine Key, serving to bring a new image to the area.

6 Continuing Rehabilitation, Infill and New Development

Rehabilitation, infill development, and other new development must come after the acceptance and adoption of the Design Guidelines as a way to control the form of these improvements. Only after the Guidelines are in place can the built environment be sure to reflect the vision of the Enhancement Plan. New development should occur naturally - appropriate to market demand, physical location and impact assessment. Therefore, we have chosen specific development to occur "last" as it will follow public investments, follow economic trends and evolve over time. In addition, development will happen almost entirely through private resources. Therefore requiring no public funding and almost no public input, except for the usual review and approvals process.